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OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION OCT 10 1947

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Departmental" English

literature is the deposit of thought and feeling left to us by and women who have encouraged life and reflected upon their experience, can we be content that teaching of literature should be a departmental business?

For purposes of convenience and as part of the tribute paid by the academic world to the modern sense of organization, we may concede that the teachers of a specific subject form a natural group of colleagues. As members of such a group they may be expected to find procurement from their working relationship with one another. Each will be helped to see the larger implications of his special area of interest within the broad field of literature. But if this means that we forget that many of their fundamental interests and purposes are common to all who teach the particular students in their classes, if they are indifferent to the experience of the authors who preceded, and of the ages which bear their stamp upon, the literature they interpret, if they do not willingly use in their teaching the methods that others who are in no way specialists can throw upon books they have their students to thank if indeed they do not completely remember that the benefit of their insight and wisdom is to the student who is studying life. It would be better if there were no department.

Could an academic department be much more than a useful administrative fiction which serves to define responsibilities sharply and definition is called for? Is it not always being supplanted and challenged by other sized relationships which consequently suggest the indefinable obligations of cooperation beyond "department" boundaries?

Gold E. B. Speight, Committee on Teacher Education of Colleges and Universities of the State of N. Y.

Notice

Membership in CEA is open to English teacher of undergraduate courses in a recognized four-college or university—or anyone who has so taught. Qualified persons in order to enroll need only the annual dues of \$2.00 to the Treasurer, Professor W. R. Richardson, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. Those who wish to enroll on December 1st as members will have their dues credited as dues for the year 1941.

CEA Annual Meeting, Boston, December 26-28

The second annual meeting of CEA will be held in conjunction with the Modern Language Association in Boston during the holidays. CEA members are asked to register at the CEA desk at MLA headquarters in the Statler Hotel and make dinner reservations. The Hotel Vendome (Boston) will serve as general and residential headquarters and meeting-place for CEA. Room reservations should be made in advance. Single room \$3.00; double room with double bed, \$4.00, with twin beds, \$5.00 and \$6.00; suites accommodating four single beds, \$2.00 per person. (Groups of four engaging these suites are urged to reserve in advance.) All rooms with private bath. Breakfast \$.40 up; luncheon \$.50 up; dinner \$.85 up. The Vendome is close to Boston University and to the Statler.

A brief business meeting will precede the dinner, for report of the Nominating Committee and election of officers.

A tentative program published in the October "News Letter" has been revised so far as hours of meeting are concerned to avoid conflict with MLA meetings. Time and place of each meeting announced in Dec. issue.

1st Session:

"MAJORING" IN ENGLISH.

1. "A History of the Language as Requisite in the 'Major':" Dorothy Bethuran, Connecticut College).

2. Discussion.

3. "The Tutorial Method as Practiced at Princeton": Robert Cawley (Princeton).

4. Discussion.

2nd Session:

CRITICISM AND THE TEACHING OF UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH.

1. "Criticism and the Drama: Doctor Faustus:" Arthur Mizener (Wells College).

2. Discussion.

3. "Criticism and Fiction: Hemingway's The Killers:" Robert Penn Warren (Louisiana)

4. Discussion.

3rd Session:

WHAT CAN TEACHERS OF ENGLISH DO TO HELP PRESERVE THE DEMOCRATIC TRADITION IN AMERICA?

1. "What shall we include in the fundamental courses in Literature?": Lenthil H. Downs (Presbyterian College, Clinton, So. Car.)

2. Discussion.

3. "What values shall we emphasize? How shall we make them clear and significant?" R. A. Jelliffe (Oberlin).

4. Discussion.

4th Session:

ENGLISH COMPOSITION: REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE WORK.

1. "A Philosophy for Required Freshman English": Theodore Morrison (Harvard).

2. Discussion.

3. "The Vocational 'Liberal Art':" Edith C. Johnson (Wellesley).

4. Discussion.

Saturday Noon:

Annual Dinner preceded by brief Business Meeting.

The Washing of Hands

It has long been axiomatic that a sane man must take the responsibility for his deeds. But from the beginning of literary history there have been writers who have claimed that words were not deeds, and that divine inspiration, poetic madness, and art-for-art's sake relieved the writer of all obligations and responsibilities. Strangely, this attitude continues to be held and freely expressed.

I use the word *strangely* because this figurative washing of hands has been done chiefly by writers who definitely abandoned the ivory tower and even, frequently, the tough integrity of art, for the cause of a sugar-coated and fictionalized propaganda. Some of them wrote words which they knew to be false, or failed to record what they knew to be truth. Russia's attack on Finland shocked some of them into shame, but it seems to have aroused no feeling of responsibility: Mr. Ralph Bates, after justifying his earlier communistic actions and beliefs (*The New Republic*, Dec. 13, 1939), apparently felt that he had made amends by writing, "I am getting off the train." Mr. Bates at least protested that his earlier beliefs were sincerely held, but a famous and widely read author did not bother to conceal the fact that he had deliberately presented only one phase of the world situation, as he knew it. In one of the most cynical and revealing statements made in our time, Mr. Vincent Sheean wrote (*The New Republic*, Nov. 8, 1939): "In my own case, these two articles will constitute the first criticism I have ever made of the Soviet Union, and the first time I have been willing to discuss Stalin (or even, in fact, to mention him) in print." Yet Mr. Sheean wrote many books and articles which, if the above statement is true, deliberately distorted the whole situation by the device of failing to mention a significant part. When the world has gone contrary to his own desires, he simply disclaims much of what he had previously written.

This absolution may be easy, but it has affirmative value. It at least admits the power of words. Far more dangerous, and equally prevalent, is the specious claim that ideas and words have no influence. Recently, Mr. Archibald MacLeish (*The New Republic*, June 10, 1940) charged that modern intellectuals have immunized the younger generation "against any attempt in its own country by its own leaders to foment a war by shouting rhetorical phrases or waving moral flags. But it was left defenseless before an aggressor ready to force war upon us. Above all, it was left defenseless against an aggressor

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Poetry's Six-point Program

This is about poetry, and specifically about what happens to the love of poetry. Why (repeat the perennial questions) do almost all children take a natural pleasure in poetry and why do almost all sophomores manifest an unnatural suspicion of the art? What happens to the instinctive response to verse between the primary grades and the college entrance examinations? How much pleasure has been dissipated? And where? Are the high schools to blame? The teachers? The textbooks?

I have neither the time nor the temerity to answer these controversial queries. But, as a peripatetic lecturer, a frequent editor, and a part-time pedagogue, I can state my own determined position. In the language of the day, this is my six-point program:

1. Never to torture anyone (except college seniors) with a differ-

ence between a dactyl and an anapest.

2. Never to allow anyone (except teachers of teachers) to "scan" a poem.

3. Never to force anyone (except my wife) to memorize a poem.

4. Never to ferret out the remote sources, the obscure influences, the multiple ambiguities, and the misty mid-region of allusions in any given stanza.

5. Never—well, hardly ever—to interrupt a poem with interpretations. (Remember the significant schoolboy boner: "Poetry is something we make prose of. This is called interrupting a poem.")

6. Never, *Never NEVER* to make anyone—especially a pupil—write a poem. Competition is bad enough as it is. Besides:

The world is so full of old second-rate verse

That no one should willingly make matters worse.

Doggedly yours,

Louis Untermeyer.

COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

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The author, the critic, and the college teacher of English may be partners in an exalted enterprise.

Editorial

"Professor" is a prefix that once conferred greater distinction in society than it has lately; perhaps since the day when it began to be applied to the chiropodist and the sleight-of-hand performer and the man who plays the piano in a dance hall. College professors then began to yearn for the simple distinction of "Mr.," and to covet that still greater evidence of campus distinction, no handle at all.

"Doctor" has suffered similar abuse, within the very realm where it should be held most in honor. Men have tried to compliment other men by using the title where it did not belong. Men have falsely claimed a right to it, where its possession meant professional prestige or an advance in salary. In some regions the degree has been purchasable for an expenditure of cash rather than intellectual effort, and even the house-cleaning of state educational departments has not destroyed all such degree factories.

It is only natural that in colleges where a minority of the faculty have earned the degree there should be more insistence upon its use and where every teacher must of necessity be a doctor the degree confers no distinction and no one cares to flaunt it. But aside from enhanced or depreciated values due to overproduction or to scarcity, the use of these handles in conversation is often a matter of local habit.

In a few institutions, and in a few geographical areas, notably New England, it is good form to address all teachers and even the highest administrative officers as Mr. (or Mrs. or Miss) reserving academic titles for academic printed matter, and for formal introductions and occasions. And our own social mentor informs us that in any university, in any region, it is never good form for the wife to refer to her husband by his title, or for anyone thus to refer to himself.

A pleasantly satiric essay might be written upon this matter of titles; for in an up-side-down way there can come to be a sort of snobbishness about the lack of a doctorate. In an institution where

doctors are the rule, one may hear faculty and students boasting about professor So-and-So, "who never earned a degree in his life." And there are few poses more prideful than that of the professor who makes a point of correcting all those who put any prefix to his name, remarking coldly, "just Jones, if you please."

If he could do it not only without pride or humility but also without self-consciousness, the English professor might properly lead the way toward the simpler forms of address in social contacts on and off the campus, reserving "Doctor" and "Professor" for official and formally academic occasions; thus helping to regain for those ancient titles the dignity they deserve.

Lincoln Steffens' Autobiography seemed by happy accident to meet the multifarious needs of freshman English courses. This was because he invaded so many fields of thought which produce fruitful discussion in freshman classrooms. He dwelt upon the problems of education from the student's viewpoint; and he faced present-day problems in city government realistically and with a philosophical attitude easily understood by the young man of today. Now Ernest Poole has done much the same thing, though perhaps his autobiography* dwells a little longer upon the making of a liberal. The two books have this valuable quality in common: each is rich in lively and revealing experience of the world today, and each author derives from such experience an understandable philosophy. While Steffens takes his readers into the great cities of this country to study with him the personalities of the men who have corrupted city politics, Poole takes us to interview labor leaders and workers in slums, stevedores and down-and-outs; and then to Russia and Italy in his journalistic search for material. He evolves a clearly expressed and wholesome philosophy as he observes the world-wide struggle of the "have-nots" to gain from the "haves" a larger share of the profits from labor.

Mr. Poole contributes in another column to one of the discussions that have been carried on in the "News Letter."

Copy for the December issue of the "News Letter" is now due. Send your comments, your ideas about English teaching, your discoveries of new methods and devices for the classroom, your inquiries of fellow teachers, in concise form to the Editor. Contributions of less than 1,000 words in length are welcome; even though they be no more than a paragraph long if they have something to say. Even an epigram might be welcome. This leaflet publication can be of great value to us all if it presents a cross-section of teacher comments and opinion.

Have you views upon this question: Is it possible to train undergraduates in the art of criticism; how best may higher standards of criticism be developed?

*"The Bridge" by Ernest Poole.

The Macmillan Co., \$2.50.

The Living Chaucer by Percy Van Dyke Shelley, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1940. \$3.00.

In writing this admirable study of Chaucer's art, Professor Shelley is not concerned with textual scholarship nor with biographical and social interpretation of Chaucer and his times. He is a Chaucer specialist and well acquainted with the advances made by Chaucerian scholarship in the last seventy years, but he has written this book out of his love and understanding of Chaucer's greatness as an artist. His audience is the general reader and lover of poetry.

It is refreshing to come upon an appreciation so informed, sensitive, and eloquent. An appreciation, too, which is greatly needed, for good criticism of Chaucer, the artist, is uncommon. While the chapters on Chaucer's poems are valuable—especially for the new student—many readers will find most enjoyment in such chapters as "On Not Reading Chaucer" and "Chaucer and the Critics." The reviewer is glad to second Professor Shelley's dictum that "Chaucer translated is no longer Chaucer," and to applaud his strictures on the "precious folk" who are offended by the poet's robust humor.

Harold Blodgett.

ANNALS OF ENGLISH DRAMA (975-1700) by Alfred Harbage. University of Pennsylvania Press. London: Humphrey Milford: Oxford University Press.

Published in cooperation with the Modern Language Association of America.

Subtitle: An analytical record of all plays, extant or lost, chronologically arranged and indexed by authors, titles, dramatic companies, etc.

The arrangement of this exhaustive compilation is chronological and tabular. In seven columns are listed for each play the author; title; date limits; dramatic classification; auspices of first production; date of first printed edition; and date of latest modern edition. Supplementing the main body of the work are valuable indexes of playwrights, plays, dramatic companies, theatres, and foreign playwrights; as well as a list of extant play manuscripts (975-1700), together with their present location. The compiler has done a thorough job in gathering and organizing the vast and scattered materials in this area of English dramatic history. Every student and teacher of English drama can welcome with genuine appreciation this important addition to the tools of their trade.

G. A. Rust.

Methinks an ancient couplet ran, "The child is teacher of the man." Then what a weight on her is piled, Whose task it is to teach the child; And humble tributes scarce may reach

The teacher teaching those who teach!

And yet the child, in lisping speeches,

The teacher of his teacher teaches.

CEA Member.

Dear Editor:

Ever since receiving the first announcement of the College English Association, I have been interested in the organization. One point has not been made clear. Are junior college instructors in English eligible for the organization?

Perhaps you know that the junior colleges have a strong hold in the West. In California we do work that is comparable to the lower division of the University of California. At the same time "educators" insist that we are a secondary school. We must have the help of the senior colleges to enable us to maintain our standards, and so hope that the privileges of membership may extend to us.

Murray G. Hill,
Pasadena Junior College

Creative Writing

As to the advanced classes in so-called Creative Writing which now are to be found in so many colleges, if such a class has its place in the curriculum it deserves a more jealous scrutiny from the curriculum committee than it has yet received. If it is a narrowed practice in a few set forms of imaginative writing, let it be so named, and honor for what it is. If it is vocational training for magazine authors with its highest reward conferred by editors who are unconnected with the institution and perhaps lacking any of those standards which higher education sets for itself, let it be so understood. If it is simply a generous effort to bring together on the campus the chosen few who are practicing writing an art, who are already aware of native endowment and wish encouragement in their work and time set apart for it; then grant it the status of a writer's club without academic credit. Let everyone recognize the fact that it deserves high place among organized activities. And so let it proceed upon its artistic way with the English teacher's encouragement and administration's blessing.

As to the instructor who offers an elective in "creative writing" and expects that academic credit will be granted his students with "pass"; let him first concede the place in the curriculum must contribute an actual mental discipline to help in producing the educated graduate. Then he must fit himself for his task with as much sincerity and devotion as is expected of an instructor in any other department.

Does he, for instance, know anything of the forces which he is setting in motion or attempting control when he assigns tasks of imaginative or creative writing? Has he familiarized himself with the theories or established hypotheses as to the nature of "inspiration"; the operations of the creative mind; the deliberate "harvesting of the sub-conscious" to the task of authorship, as is the practice of so many experienced writers? Is he more than vaguely and gropingly aware of the fact that there are different types of men among his own students and that the assignment of one sort of writing task might be profitable to one and highly unprofitable to another?

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Social Purpose in Fiction

Should a writer of fiction have any social purpose or try to develop any theme? It seems to me that all depends on the kind of story he writes. I have written novels and scores of short stories in which I had no other purpose than to tell the story I had in mind. But as I look back upon my work it seems to me that my best jobs were done in stories that did have some social purpose or theme as background to the tales. I am not at all ashamed of that. Lincoln Steffens told me at the start:

"In whatever you write, for God's sake don't put it on ice by trying to feel both sides of the issue involved. That will leave your reader cold. Choose your side and warm up to it and that will warm your reader too."

And this present age is one in which all life is so filled with issues vitally affecting us all that the man who takes sides on none of them is a mighty tame and pallid guy. So here's to doing what you can for any social purpose which honestly has a real grip on your heart!

"But I have no use for the kind of writing which lets the author intrude on the tale. Step back and let your characters talk. Mine, I find, won't talk for me—for when I am doing my best work they become such real and separate people, at least to me, that my hands get cold from writing so fast, as I sit like a stenographer taking dictation from the voices heard inside of my head. But it's my hand and they are all my characters from the start. And so, while talking for themselves, some of them are likely to say quite a few things from their author's point of view, or in the issue involved, some of them are pretty sure to be very warmly on my side.

If the critics agree with them then, they will puff my novel as the realistic art. If they don't agree, they will slam me for reaching. But much as I like good reviews, I find life so filled with good big fights which appeal to me that very often I create characters who feel as I do. God help us, we can't help feeling like that, for we live in an age that has so much at stake.

Ernest Poole.

President De Vane has appointed the following members of the Nominating Committee to report at the annual meeting in Boston: Horace A. Eaton, Syracuse, Chairman; Milton Ellis, Maine; Robert T. Fitzgugh, Maryland; Harry K. Russell, North Carolina; W. D. Templeman, Illinois; Austin Warren, Iowa; F. L. Padelford, Washington. It is the task of this committee to submit a list of candidates for the offices of president and two vice-presidents and three directors for a term of three years, to replace those retiring this year. CEA members who wish to suggest nominations should communicate with the chairman of this committee.

Syracuse Meeting

Some ten years ago, Professor Edward Everett Hale of Union was keen upon taking a hint from the teachers of history and gathering the teachers of English in up-state colleges in an annual conference at which there should be no fixed program and, especially, no learned papers. We should gather together merely as neighbors, to get acquainted. As a result of his urging, several of us united to send out letters proposing such a plan; and later, invitations to assemble in Cazenovia. Twice we met there and twice the conference proved successful. Then for some unexplained reason, the scheme lapsed.

In the years which followed frequent regrets came to some of us that the conferences had been discontinued; so that this spring, my immediate colleagues at Syracuse, Professors Herrington and Shepard, joined with me in sending letters to colleges asking for an expression of opinion. The response was favorable, so we went ahead to plan for a two-day conference on 19-20 October at Cazenovia again. At the last moment, largely because of the number of acceptances, we found it necessary to transfer the place of meeting to Syracuse.

The earlier meetings had been held in the late spring. This time it was felt that calendars would be less crowded in the fall, and in spite of foot-ball we seem to have been justified. Sixty-seven sat down to dinner on Saturday night; and at one time or another, more than seventy-five attended, representing eleven colleges from Buffalo to Union. The afternoon was given entirely to meeting colleagues and chatting. After dinner, there was a general meeting. At this a committee was provided for to carry on, for there seemed to be a strong feeling that the plan should be continued. The evening seemed to need some centre, even though "no program" was promised, and Professor Henning Larsen of Illinois gave a delightful short talk. Then we swapped accounts of how we were handling freshman English, a rewarding discussion. Then came more informal chat. And so good night!

Few stayed over until Sunday, so that the conference really ended on Saturday evening. And that would seem to be the probable end of future meetings. Where we shall meet next year depends upon the committee of arrangements. It has been proposed that we should all come primed to talk on some pre-agreed-upon topic of general interest, but that again will be left to the committee. I think that I can say that this sort of get-together is pre-eminently worth while; and I can commend it to other regions where neighboring colleges are close enough together. Older members learn that their colleagues are more than names; younger members, entirely unknown to their elders and each other, become persons.

Horace A. Eaton,
Syracuse University.

Virginia and Her Neighbors

A Regional Group of the CEA for the states of Virginia, West Virginia, and North Carolina held its first meeting in Richmond October 26 at the Hotel John Marshall. The committee calling the group together included Professor J. D. Bennett, Sweet Briar College, Caroline S. Lutz, Westhampton College, Mary Dee Long, Sweet Briar, Fraser Nieman and W. R. Richardson of William and Mary. Permanent organization was effected and officers chosen for the coming year, (further details in December "News Letter"). Membership in the regional group includes representatives of the University of Richmond, Hollins Institute, Virginia Military Institute, Va. Polytechnic Inst., Sweet Briar, William and Mary, University of Virginia, and teachers colleges in the several states. We reprint in part an article from the Richmond Times-Dispatch of October 27.

Speaking at a meeting of the College English Association at Hotel John Marshall yesterday Colonel Raymond E. Dixon of the Virginia Military Institute told the score of teachers of English in attendance how they might best serve the cause of democracy.

Instructors in English, he said, can exert influence in emphasizing two issues, the struggle between individualism and its enemies and the moral issues. "Let us reduce, if necessary the philological load and the amusing but little relevant biographical anecdotes for the sake of a few plain and earnest words about right and wrong in this world," he said.

Other speakers were Dr. Richard Schofield, professor of English at St. John's College, Annapolis, who described in detail the St. John's College program, and Dr. Grace Warren Landrum, dean of women and professor of English at the College of William and Mary. Telling of a survey of letters of applicants for college entry, she said these showed the most read book by prospective freshmen was "Gone With the Wind," the next "Rebecca," with "Grapes of Wrath" in third place.

COLLEGE CONFERENCE ON ENGLISH IN THE CENTRAL ATLANTIC STATES

Chairman: Professor Elizabeth Cox Wright, Swarthmore College.
Secretary-Treasurer: Professor Karl J. Holzknecht, New York University.

This year the College Conference on English is resuming its affiliation with the Middle States Association and will hold its annual Thanksgiving meeting in Atlantic City on Saturday, November 23, 1940, at 10:30 a.m. in the Rutland Room of Haddon Hall.

Subject: Planning the Curriculum in English.

a. First instruction in Composition; Professor Theodore J. Gates, Pennsylvania State College.

b. First Instruction in Literature; Professor J. Milton French, Rutgers University.

c. The English Major; Dean William C. DeVane, Yale Univ.

Education For Democracy

Whenever someone says that our schools and colleges should educate for democracy, there is much nodding of heads. The assertion seems true enough to us all until we try to figure out what it means.

When the schools take up any new subject for study they need to know just what it is and how to study it. Teachers must be trained to teach it; students must sooner or later learn just why they are studying it, as well as what they are studying.

What is democracy? Even the post-graduate courses in our universities will not agree on a definition. Suppose we say "democracy is that form of popular self-government which limits individual freedom only when it interferes with the freedom of others." Then ask any teacher who faces the task of educating for democracy whether such a definition is adequate; whether it excludes communism which calls itself "social democracy." Half of the teachers asked will not be sure, and those who are sure will find that many intelligent teachers disagree with them.

But let us leave our definition, and go to the colleges with these three questions: Does democracy work? Is it efficient? Is it worth while? A majority of the learned doctors in American History and Political Science began their teaching in the disillusioned period following the first world war, and we shall find most of them answering "No" to the first two questions, and finding themselves in difficulty with the third because of the way they answered the others.

It is natural for them to say that democracy does not work. Its mistakes have fairly shouted at them. During a glib decade these young teachers have been destroying old clichés, and exposing the emptiness of slogans, and debunking history which, they say, was written emotionally. They are partly excusable, because a great many of our old slogans have become empty of meaning, and a great deal of our history has been written more in the heat of emotion than in the calm of reason, and has been influenced as much by tradition as by research. But these young men forget that destructive teaching is the easiest, and that classroom debunking can have its own source in the emotions and grow into an emotional debauch.

Shall we have any better luck with the departments of Philosophy? Here we are likely to find that men have been digging up old bones of thought and putting them together; at best discussing how closely the reconstructed thing resembles any of men's notions today. Here, too, we are likely to learn only that creeds and patterns of thought are born and die and then are born to die again. Such classroom experience will add to learning, but it may not help youngsters to face the fiery tests of democracy with understanding and faith, and hope, and firm resolve.

We turn in desperation to the
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Solving the Problem of Big Composition Classes

Inadequate appropriations, like other forms of necessity, often mother some striking inventions. English departments in Nebraska colleges are often, more often than not, undermanned, and the department in our college is no exception. No instructor carries less than fourteen hours; more often he carries sixteen to eighteen, with each class having thirty of forty members in it. It is not unusual for an instructor to carry a load of sixteen hours, with twelve of it constructive English.

The department found at the opening of the spring semester this year there were 69 seniors enrolled in a required course in advanced composition. I usually teach the course, and from experience have learned that twenty-five to thirty is the maximum enrollment for me to handle with any degree of proficiency. Here was the class, however; and each member had to have the course for graduation.

No other instructor's teaching load would permit him to add a three-hour class. I could not divide the class, for there was no one to teach the other half.

I interested another instructor, despite her full load, to work with me in the experiment of having one instructor teach the class and correct the papers while the other conducted the personal interviews.

We began the course by having a brief summary of the fundamentals, with especial reference to the grammar of the sentence, and with various devices for securing sentence variety. This part my assistant took.

While Miss Kelly took half the period on this special work, I took the other half on the composition as a whole, with especial reference to the selection of topics and organization of the theme. After the first week, I called for the themes and corrected each one. Occasionally I made remarks on the theme in addition to the correction of faulty construction. I gave the grade.

We did not want the class to feel that one person was doing the teaching and the other giving the grade. The personal interview was to enable the student to find out why his paper was good, why it was poor or mediocre, and how to improve it. Miss Kelly's task was supplementary to mine.

Miss Kelly and I often discussed the work of individuals before the personal interview. We agreed fundamentally on what constituted the right way to do a certain assignment. Through our interviews we could truly help the student.

Toward the end of the course, I selected at random ten members of the class and asked them to write frankly their criticism of the procedure. No one was asked to sign his paper, but three of them did.

All ten papers praised the plan. Each student felt that he had received vital help, that he had been shown his mistakes and told how to prevent their repetition.

Some of the writers mentioned that they dreaded to miss the class-

work which would be given during the time of their interviews. That is an obvious drawback, but we were unable to schedule separate hours for interviews. We could not afford to give the instructor's time other than during the scheduled hour for the class. As we handled it, the instructor could see five each hour, or fifteen during the week. Toward the end of the semester, often I assigned a short paper to be written during the class period. With these papers we could often arrange for Miss Kelly to see as many as eight students within the hour.

Two or more of the unsigned papers suggested that it would be better to have more frequent interviews. With this Miss Kelly and I agreed, but it was impossible. As it was every student had at least three interviews, and some of them four or five.

Like many another teacher of advanced composition, I have always felt much of my work was done in a vacuum. If I cut down on the number of themes required and interviewed the writers, I could not give them as much experience as they needed. On the other hand, if I gave as much writing experience as I felt they needed, it was out of the question for me to interview the writers. It would also tax me to correct each paper beyond placing a grade on it.

We think the procedure worked. I know it "worked" Miss Kelly and me. Whether our schedule will permit a like set-up next year I do not know.

Calvin T. Ryan,
State Teachers College,
Kearney, Nebraska.

An Experiment in Socialized Teaching

For several years I have felt that unless freshman students can be made really interested in learning to read, to speak, and to write effectively efforts to eliminate their language deficiencies will be to little or no avail. That is, improvement, if any, will be more or less ephemeral. Hence, "An Experiment in Socialized Teaching." It was, in a word, an effort to bring about active participation of the students and the teacher in the course to socialize the work by making the assignments engaging, real and live.

The lecture-recitation system was abandoned in favor of personalized instruction. We tried to relate all materials of the course directly to the individual life problems, aims, and ambitions of the students. The mass production system used extensively in Freshman English classes usually assigns all students a certain chapter in a textbook and questions them on what they have temporarily memorized from tests and from classroom lectures. This class used textbooks merely as guides. The students were encouraged, however, not to depend for information solely upon the spoken word of the teacher.

Socialized teaching tries to get the students to utilize the materials of the course. It aims to make

the value of expressive reading, speaking, and writing immediate and of lasting impression. For example, two members of the class, who are interested in dramatics, made a painstaking study of the motion picture "Gone with the Wind." They studied several newspaper and magazine articles by prominent critics and compared them with their personal reactions. Finally, with two questions, "What was the picture trying to do?" and "How well was it done?", as critical touchstones, they attempted to evaluate it. A fellow who represents the college track team was stimulated by Gene Venzke's account (A Running Story) of his defeat of Glenn Cunningham. Venzke's manner in running the mile race fascinated this student; he tried to apply it to his own way of running. And it is noteworthy that the first worthwhile theme written by this student was a critical essay on Venzke's "A Running Story." He compared it with newspaper accounts of races involving John Borican, Glenn Cunningham, and John Woodruff. Another student was popular because of his knowledge of the mechanism of radios. He could make his own short-wave radio set, but he could not handle his language well. While discussing the importance of the radio, we pointed out that this importance is made especially clear by some writings. Davidson Taylor's "Tomorrow's Broadcast" caught his attention. He read other articles also. We experienced surprisingly little difficulty in convincing this student of the necessity of being able to tell us about his reading in effective writing.

As the course progressed various writings treating a multitude of subjects were mentioned, and occasionally discussed. Often some of the students did investigate papers voluntarily. A case in point is the study which tried to ascertain the college student's place in the present-day world. It was based on such thought-stimulating articles as Horace M. Kallen's "College Prologues Infancy," Charles A. Beard's "Under the Nazis," and Raymond Moley's "Depression Graduates."

In our study of letter writing we used actual personal and business letters. We examined various forms and the students were free to adopt the forms they preferred.

The object of this experiment, as has been said, was to create in the students an earnest desire to read, to speak, and to write effectively. Whether or not the effort was worthwhile may be seen in that no student failed to make appreciable improvement. Some possessing ability but lacking stimulation far exceeded our expectations. To some extent the improvement is ascribable to the absence of "grade consciousness" among the students. Continually we fought against it. The class was encouraged to feel that the important thing was not to get "A" or "B" but to master the essentials of effective expression. Reading, speaking, and writing well, they realized, require hard and constant work, and the manner in which they did work was praiseworthy.

J. Randolph Fisher,
Allen University.

Education for Democracy

(Continued from Page 3)

professors of English. Theirs is a subject which at least demands the attention of every college student somewhere along his way; and it concerns itself with the thoughts and visions of thinkers and dreamers living and dead. More than that, it asks each student to do a little thinking and dreaming of his own and then try to express it.

Here, too, so many of the teachers are young. And many have been walking in such absorbed companionship with Chaucer or the romantic poets that they look upon blinking at the world around them. But let us offer them a question— which certainly belongs to them— for their writing classes and their outside reading. "In the ideal democracy, shall there be complete freedom of expression of opinion, even though it immediately arouses action which will affect the liberties of others?"

"I cannot ask them such a question" says the English instructor "because I do not know the answer and I am not trained to answer it. But I could ask them to discuss it and perhaps" he adds with sudden eagerness, "I could bring in references to the burning of Milton's *Defensio*, and Bunyan in prison."

So they do discuss it; and some eager youngsters urge restraint upon all non-conformists, while others urge complete freedom to utter heresies or sacrilege or incite to violence. The instructor helps the discussion along by recommending readings from great books of the past and pamphlets of the present, wherein men used freedom of expression and suffered for it.

Rumors of such a discussion spread abroad. "Stop it!" cry the philosophers and the political scientists, "that young man is not trained to conduct such a discussion!" "Stop it!" cry the parents, "our sons are playing with dangerous notions!" "Stop it!" cry the administrators and friends of the college, "such discussions are giving the place a bad name!" All agree that the English instructor should confine himself to problems of style and syntax, and that all reading he recommends should be safe and sane.

Perhaps they are right; perhaps the teacher is too young to be wise or too wise to be unprejudiced. But do any teachers of an older generation know all the answers whatever their department of teaching? And if our youngsters are to draw any nearer to the right answers than we ourselves have yet come, how shall we help them to think freely, and what predigested material shall we offer them to think with?

Education for democracy is no easy thing, even in a democracy. Burges Johnson

The Washing of Hands

(Continued from Page 1)

whose cynicism, whose brutality and whose stated intention to enslave presented the issue of the future in moral terms. . . To suspect not only the tags, not only the slogans, but 'even all words' is to stand disarmed and helpless before an aggressor whose strength consists precisely in destroying respect for the law, respect for morality and respect for the Word."

It may be that the nation is realizing, slowly and painfully, that life must be founded on ethical and moral bases, or it will quickly succumb to totalitarianism. But Mr. Richard Aldington can not see that writers are in any way to blame for our apathy and confusion; to him, words are only words, and they are never translatable into action (*Time*, June 24, 1940): "It is a typical high-brow delusion to suppose that authors influence anyone but the intellectuals and that intellectuals count for anything in the formation of national policy and the state of the mass mind." This casuistical over-simplification is cleverly false, and more dangerous than an outright lie. The intellectuals have influence. Their ideas permeate our thoughts and direct our actions. Sometimes this permeation is indirect, sometimes subtle; but it is surprisingly immediate. What these men advocate today is, next week and next month, echoed and simplified and popularized by editorial writers, columnists, and teachers over the entire country. Few men think clearly, have confidence in their thinking. One part of our confusion can be traced to intellectuals who have written always with dogmatic confidence, who have appeared to handle ideas with convincing ease and certitude, and in consequence have done much to destroy our faith in ourselves. For ideas are the most subtle of weapons. Their power has been shown in recent months in Norway and Belgium and France, Brazil and Mexico.

The intellectual deals in words. Ideas are first translated into action through the medium of words. The honest writer must be forced to realize that in the end words do prevail; the propagandist accepts this as fact. When Mr. Aldington writes: "Most intellectuals make rotten soldiers anyway, so their defection is of small importance," he is talking nonsense. He would make the soldier, and the soldier, of importance in modern warfare. But men fight after they are keyed to it, and their strength may be crippled before and during the fighting.

It seems evident that a man's duty as citizen comes before his duty as artist. Yet there is no conflict, basically, between these duties. If we but speak honestly, out of our full knowledge, that is enough.

Mr. Walter Duranty gave to one of his books the amazing title, *I Write as I Please*. Few men can do this, or attain momentarily the detachment that they have done so. But the right to attempt just that is, continuously but truly, a price-

less heritage. Although it ends one particular individual's attempts, this is a concept worth dying for. It is also a concept which demands that the writer assume responsibility for his words.

The editors of such liberal magazines as *The New Republic* and *The Nation* have too frequently refused to admit responsibility. Their steady campaign to identify totalitarian Russia with democracy has weakened the idea and ideals of democracy. They have presented week after week the best side of the Soviet Union, and failed to present the worst—and their words have been repeated with slight alteration in newspapers, classrooms, and lecture halls. Even worse, they have presented a one-sided case as a fair, rounded, and complete picture. We can discount the words of Nazi, Fascist, and Communist propaganda organs; they are dangerous, but their bias is known. The case of a magazine like *The New Republic* is more complicated. The editors have claimed to be fair—often, omnisciently fair-minded. And errors have been paid for, if at all, by a genial washing of hands.

We are at war, though we are not yet fighting a war. It is a war of ideas, as well as of battles. The outposts of freedom we have gained for ourselves are valuable; it is distressing that some of them must be voluntarily abandoned, but these outposts can be regained later. The danger at present is that all our freedom, our liberties, and our way of life will be totally destroyed, while we quarrel over minor aspects of essential things. We must prepare rapidly and effectively to continue the fight which France has lost, and England may soon lose. The quibbling casuistry and the half-truth are intellectual luxuries we can not afford. They have already hurt us severely. The writer should not be mobilized; I hope that he will not be censored. But if he is to escape these dangers, he must become a responsible citizen and a responsible writer. He has not the right to abstain from honesty and then announce that he is getting off the train, while continuing to praise the train itself; he has no right to say that words have no value, therefore he can toss words about without regard to their meaning or effect. Both attitudes are a betrayal of art, and a dangerous menace to democracy.

Edd Winfield Parks,
University of Georgia.

Freshman English

Are we alone in teaching Freshman English as we do in Westhampton College? It is true that during the past decade we have changed the course again and again, emphasizing at one time the essay-throughout-the-world, at another experimenting with various forms of writing even to the short story, with the pitiable results well imagined by any English teacher.

Now we believe we know what we wish to do and how we hope

to do it. In our curriculum Freshman English and the Sophomore Survey are required of all students. Instead of making them two entirely separate courses, we have so planned the work of the two years that it forms a unit of study. We place the emphasis of the first year necessarily upon writing, beginning with the informal and personal, and then introducing the students to the mechanics of the investigative paper. We do not pretend it is research. Both kinds of writing are continued throughout the second year.

Our radical change comes in the teaching of literature. The first year course now covers the literature of England up to 1500. Since in a one-year survey the writings before Chaucer must receive scant attention, we find the two-year period a great improvement. Far too many students leave high school with the impression given by their text that in the beginning was Beowulf and immediately after, because discussed in the following chapter, came Chaucer. Their first surprise comes when they realize that as much time passed between Beowulf and Chaucer as between Chaucer and Thomas Hardy. The question naturally follows, "What happened during those 600 years?" This our study attempts in part to answer.

Let no one try to teach Old and Middle English to freshmen who does not believe it should be taught. I do. I believe students should know as much of it and about it as they can, and I find the majority of them enjoy it. To most of them it is new, and something new in English is good for those who were so recently top ranking seniors in their high school classes. I find that while the Ancient History professor is discussing paleolithic and neolithic man in Egypt, a first year English class is apt to believe the British Isles had not yet been formed. The literature before Chaucer we, of course, read in translation with only tempting glimpses at the language as it was. My constant cry to all book men is for a pre-Chaucerian anthology, prose and verse. It is then I am told I alone want it. Is that true? Chaucer we read in the only way Chaucer should be read—as he wrote.

How does composition come in? We write throughout the year. After seven weeks of review and drill, the students writing from their own experience, we begin the investigative paper, and the material here used is the literature and its background studied. The student feels there is a reason for such writing; there is an understandable approach in studying English Literature chronologically; there is the foundation laid for the survey of the Renaissance and modern writers. For six years such has been our plan of work. We believe it is in the direction of results desired. Being more amused and annoyed than convinced by tests and measurements, I am not one to say what results are actually attained.

Margaret Ross,
Westhampton College
University of Richmond.

Advice to One Who Thinks of Leaving Teaching for Writing

The first thing for you to remember and the last thing for you to belittle is the fact that you have a profession, training for which has involved a good deal of time and money, and considerable exceedingly valuable experience. The value of that profession as an asset will diminish very rapidly and in geometrical ratio to the time you stay out of it. Like any other profession, you have to practice it and keep in touch with the progress made in it by others. You can't hop-skip-jump in and out of it; the training-schools are all the time pouring out hordes of young people, and the jobs are full and subject to long waiting-lists. And all the time you are getting older, which fact is (up to a certain age-limit) an asset when you are active in any profession but an increasing liability when you are out of it.

I don't know of any profession which is 100-per cent delightful, or many people in any who don't wish more or less that they had chosen some other. "The good fishing is always in the next town," as an old fisherman friend of mine used to say. No matter to what form of activity you devote yourself; whether you continue in the teaching profession or go into writing or art or whatever, you will continue to find periods of exasperation or imprisonment; that is simply the way of life, and it is peculiarly so in the outskirts of literature and other forms of "art." For every one who makes a success of writing, painting, sculpture or whatnot there are countless thousands eating out their hearts, constituting an unbelievable competition. You have no idea of the hordes of them.

Those who succeed are, generally speaking, of two kinds: First, those who have the unquenchable genius for it. Nothing can stop them. They have something to say, or to paint or to "sculpt." Some of them are in other kinds of jobs, giving them a meal-ticket while they do creative work in every moment that they can wrench from the dull task. They *have* to write or paint, or whatever; it gives them no peace. Quite often their own times and communities do not recognize them; but those who manage to come to the top in their own time are those who definitely have something to say at any cost.

The other kind, and there are many such, stumble into success because they *happen* to hit it in some fluke of fortune or public whim or ephemeral timeliness; hit it once and never again; though they work their fingers to the bone and never understand why their explosion cannot be repeated. One book a best-seller, the next a flop, and after that—nothing at all. It is an old, old story, oft-repeated. But even these are very, very few, compared with the thousands who try very hard and waste the best years of their lives, without ever hitting any kind of bulls-eye. There is also a class of hack-writers,

(Continued on Page 6)

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Creative Writing

(Continued from Page 2)

another; and that certainly the results from each could not be subjected to some common test of attainment? In the individual conference, recognizedly of supreme importance in such work, he made himself a competent counselor by reason of his own earnest and prolonged study of his peculiar teaching problems; or is he simply adding his own undisciplined emotion to the super-abundance of that commodity which his artistic young student may already possess, contributing nothing else whatsoever?

Teachers of history and natural science and mathematics and modern languages have learned much in the past few years, not only as to the nature of the material with which they deal, but how to provide a mental discipline for their students through the media of their own particular classrooms.

The teacher of creative writing has still some distance to go and he must begin by trying to find out exactly what he is teaching; then exactly why he is teaching it; and finally, whether he is fit for the job.

—From the report of the Syracuse inquiry into Teaching Composition in American Colleges.

Advice to One Who
Thinks of Writing

(Continued from Page 5)

who have a gift of putting words together, who by working very hard manage somehow to scrape together a bare living. But all of these, with exceptions so few as to be negligible, have training and experience in writing: they are reporters on newspapers mostly; but anyway writing is their trade; they worked up in it from the bottom. And from that bottom a great many more drop down and out, than climb up even a little way. It is a hard, hard training, compared with which teaching is easy and pleasant.

"Writing" doesn't mean anything. Anybody can do it who owns a typewriter or a lead-pencil and can wangle a piece of paper. The big question is, *Write what?* It isn't enough to be able to put words together grammatically. You have to have something to say, either that hasn't been said before commonly, or that you can say so differently that it sounds new even if it isn't; or something in a field of your own that you have discovered or cultivated yourself by experience, suffering, observation, reflection, interpretation. You must be, or have done, or seen or thought, something different; something that is your own, and that you *must* write. . . "Woe is me if I preach not *this* gospel."

Now, so far as I know, you never have written anything, and I see no signs of your being on fire with a passion to write anything—I mean anything in particular. You think of writing, I judge, as a thing you can more or less suddenly begin to do, with the idea that you can increasingly make a living at it; although you never have been trained to do it, know nothing of the technique either of the thing itself or of the ways of marketing what you write. You may have something up your sleeve, in the way of experience or marketable cogitations, that I know nothing about and do not even suspect. You might score a big hit with something, and follow it up with a stream of other things as good or maybe progressively better. Far be it from me to be "snooty" toward you. Especially since I never in fifty-odd years of writing myself scored one single big hit. I have made my living primarily as a reporter and as an executive in a business requiring long experience with and study of the technique of it. In mere writing as an activity for its own sake, I couldn't earn my salt: long ago I learned that. At first it was a grief to me; but I no longer kid myself about it. The things that I have written that might be called successful were without exception by-products of my salaried job. And they have been few and far between. Always I had my meal-ticket; mostly I had to steal or make time to do those extra things.

Time and again I have said to young people laboring under the delusion that they could give up their paying jobs and earn their living by "writing": "My dear, there is nothing in it. Never let go of the raft that is keeping you

afloat unless the next thing to catch hold of is in plain sight." Moreover, if you really want to write, and have anything to write, the best sign of it would be that you got yourself a job at your own profession, to give yourself bread-and-butter (to say nothing of ice-cream and cake), to support yourself until you got your writing under way. If you are bound to write, and actually have something to write, you will write, never fear. Nothing can stop you. 'Articles, stories, possibly radio material' doesn't really mean anything. Articles about what? Stories about what? Radio material—for whom? All those fields are clogged to the eaves with people and manuscripts, and the radio business is a slavery whose restrictions you can't imagine—teaching is freedom personified compared with it. And in none of these things have you, so far as I know, any experience or previous success to offer.

Now, if you can afford to live for a year without any income whatever, or possibly five dollars here, ten dollars next week or next month, twenty-five dollars in one lump once or twice by a streak of great luck; it might be worth while just for the experience, probably a very tough and disillusioning experience, to try the experiment and get this whole group of ideas out of your system. Blow all the soap-bubbles at once, plant and climb your beanstalk and meet the ogres at the top. Then you would, more or less as you imagine—probably a great deal less—find out what if anything you can do. You might, even though up to date you haven't shown any signs of it, make a success of it and be able to thumb your nose at me and all the rest of the skeptics. But the very serious drawback is that if you *didn't* succeed, and tried to get back into the profession in which you have had good and expensive training and experience, you would find that the profession had moved on beyond the place where you stepped out.

There are some professions that a man can leave for awhile and get back into without handicap because of absence. Indeed, his intervening experience may have actually added to his equipment. That isn't so of your profession. But there is nothing about your profession to prevent you writing anything you please while practicing it; and there is the further fact that that profession and your experience in it constantly furnish you with fresh material to write about. My own feeling is that you are looking at the thing hind-side-before; that you'd better make your escape from the inside by first proving that you could get along outside. A year of writing (*making* time to do it: using for it some of the time that you waste) on the assured footing of a job in the profession that you know, would show to you and everybody else whether you would be justified in going off the deep end. The water off there is very deep, and cold, and lonesome for beginners.

John Palmer Gavitt.

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